United Nations A/68/958–S/2014/547

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
1 August 2014
English
Original: Arabic

General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session
Agenda item 70 (a)
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Security Council
Sixty-ninth year

Identical letters dated 29 July 2014 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the fifth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014):

1. In keeping with its firm position that the humanitarian situation and its implications are the Syrian State's top priority, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has marshalled all its resources to meet the pressing need to provide shelter, food and medicine to all civilians who have been affected by the crimes committed by armed terrorist groups. Since 2011, it has worked to meet the needs of its citizens, in keeping with its constitutional responsibility towards them, and has cooperated with the United Nations and its agencies in the provision and delivery of humanitarian assistance to persons affected by the crisis.

2. In that regard, it reaffirms its readiness to continue to cooperate with the United Nations to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all affected Syrian citizens, without discrimination. It is also abides by the letter and spirit of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014), in accordance with the sequence of steps specified in Security Council resolution 2165 (2014) and the understanding reached in the Security Council in that regard and on the basis of respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law, the guiding principles for humanitarian emergency assistance annexed to General Assembly resolution 46/182 and, above all, the principle of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria that was reaffirmed in Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014).

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3. The guiding principles for humanitarian emergency assistance stress that the affected country should consent to the provision of humanitarian assistance within its territory. Those principles also stress the primary role of the affected country in the organization, coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance. We therefore expect the United Nations and its agencies, in keeping with their commitment to the aforementioned principles, which include neutrality and impartiality, to implement the Security Council resolutions transparently, without politicization and on the basis that the sole purpose of United Nations assistance operations is to respond to humanitarian needs, instead of attempting to realize particular political agendas and taking part in the violation of Syria's sovereignty and the undermining of the Syrian State, as has been evident in the behaviour of certain senior United Nations officials responsible for humanitarian affairs. In order to achieve that goal, assistance must be delivered and distributed directly to all Syrians in all regions in a fair and non-selective manner. The Syrian Government should be provided, in advance, with clear, transparent and detailed plans that include information on the number of civilian beneficiaries and how assistance will be delivered to areas in which armed terrorist groups, some of which are included in the United Nations lists of terrorist entities, are active. Those plans should also contain the names of implementing partners. Non-governmental organizations should conduct their activities in complete transparency and be forthright regarding the amount of assistance they are providing and their sources of funding. In addition, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic stresses the need to cooperate with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, the primary partner for United Nations relief activities in Syrian territory, in the distribution of assistance brought in across the border and to steer clear of dealing with terrorist organizations that are on United Nations counter-terrorism lists or organizations affiliated with them.

4. Ensuring full implementation of the provisions of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014) requires continued cooperation and coordination between the United Nations, represented by its country team in Syria, and the Syrian Government. Over the past few years, such cooperation has resulted in the delivery of assistance to millions of Syrians throughout the country, including hot spots, as has been confirmed by reports issued by United Nations bodies and agencies operating in Syria. The office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Syria is responsible for overseeing all United Nations activities in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic therefore stresses that the Resident Coordinator must supervise all relief operations, including those involving the importation of assistance across the borders, in coordination with the Syrian Government. Such a course of action would ensure the implementation of the letter and spirit of Security Council resolution 2165 (2014) and the application of the fundamental principles governing the work of the United Nations in crises.

5. The Syrian Government reiterates its keen concern for the security and safety of aid workers affiliated with the United Nations and its agencies, something that was stressed in Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014). In that same vein, Syria emphasizes that those workers must respect national laws regarding the presence of foreigners in Syrian territory. Accordingly, in order for any officials of international agencies or their implementing partners to enter the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, they must obtain a valid entry visa from a Syrian embassy or consulate. Otherwise, their presence in Syrian territory shall be considered illegal and subject to the laws in force. It would also constitute a

violation of Syria's sovereignty and, by extension, Security Council resolution 2165 (2014). The Syrian Government stresses that it must be informed sufficiently in advance of the importation of humanitarian assistance into its territory so that it may take the necessary measures to ensure the delivery of such assistance and also to ensure the security and safety of humanitarian agency personnel.

6. The Syrian Government finds it strange that the report addresses the situation in the area of separation of forces, inasmuch as that is a transgression of the mandate established by the relevant Security Council resolutions. The situation in the area of separation is covered by the reports of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force.

7. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates has previously conveyed to the Resident Coordinator for United Nations activities in Syria the displeasure of the Syrian Government over the haphazard manner in which senior United Nations officials have arbitrarily included inaccurate and undocumented figures on humanitarian needs in Syria in their statements, reports and assessments. The Government furthermore objects to the reliance by the drafters of the report on information taken from unsubstantiated testimony and reports issued by politicized parties, in particular the reports of the special international commission of inquiry for Syria, which are characterized by politicization and lack of objectivity.

8. Although it continues to approve requests made by United Nations organizations and international organizations to import humanitarian assistance via the official border crossings with Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey, the Syrian Government finds it deplorable that the Secretary-General's report overlooks the Turkish Government's refusal to allow the World Food Programme and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to import humanitarian assistance via the Nusaybin crossing on the border with Turkey. This refusal necessitated the shipment of those supplies by aircraft from Damascus airport to Qamishli airport.

9. Whenever possible, the Syrian Government has facilitated the efforts of the United Nations to reach many hard-to-reach areas and hotspots in Rif Dimashq, the eastern and western parts of the Aleppo countryside, Idlib and the Dar'a countryside. In addition, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered humanitarian assistance to those areas in the period from 23 June 2014 to 22 July 2014:

- With the approval of the Syrian Government, the United Nations, in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, delivered humanitarian assistance to Mu'addamiyah, Rif Dimashq governorate, in the period from 14 to 21 July 2014. This assistance consisted of food as well as non-food and medical supplies and vaccines for polio, measles and other diseases. In total, some 6,000 food parcels and 800 sacks of flour were provided, sufficient for approximately 30,000 persons. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent also brought two mobile clinics into Mu'addamiyah in the above-mentioned period. Medical teams treated 1,081 persons, 447 of whom were children. The teams also brought in 1,000 units of polio and measles vaccine, administered vaccines for other diseases and provided the area clinic with 250 ampoules of insulin to treat cases of diabetes. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent, in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), also delivered medical assistance to Mu'addamiyah on 28 July 2014. In addition, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, acting on the recommendation of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in

Syria, is in the process of establishing a medical unit and a branch office in Mu'addamiyah.

- The delivery by the United Nations of humanitarian assistance to Mu'addamiyah and what the Organization witnessed inside the city confirms that it is not under siege, contrary to the claims made in the Secretariat's reports.

- On 10 July 2014, the Syrian Government reiterated for the third time its official request to the United Nations to deliver humanitarian assistance to Adra al-Ummaliyah and Adra al-Balad, which have been besieged since the beginning of 2013. To date, the United Nations has not responded to those requests.

- The Syrian Arab Red Crescent, in cooperation with the United Nations, also delivered humanitarian assistance to the following areas:

    - Dar'a governorate: 4,000 food and medical parcels were delivered to Yadudah, Tall Shihab and Zayzun

    - Idlib governorate: 18,200 food parcels were delivered to Ariha, Abu al-Duhur, Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, Harim, Quraqanya, Kafr Takharim, Arminaz, Darkush, Sarmin, Kafraya, Ma'arrah and Fu'ah

    - Hama governorate: 2,874 food parcels were delivered to Masyaf, Sahan, Salamiyah, Suqaylibiyah and Hama city

    - Aleppo city: 3,350 food parcels were distributed to eastern and western parts of the city

    - Rif Dimashq governorate: 21,919 food parcels were distributed to Yabrud, Nabk, Tall, Kiswah and Qarah

- On 18 July 2014, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered humanitarian assistance consisting of 500 food parcels sufficient for 2,500 persons to Qadam and Asbaynah in Rif Dimashq. It also brought in two mobile surgical units.

- The Syrian Arab Red Crescent, in cooperation with WHO, delivered medical and surgical supplies to four hospitals in the eastern and western parts of Aleppo city. The requests of ICRC to deliver medical supplies to Bab and Manbij hospitals in the Aleppo countryside were also approved.

- On 22 July 2014, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) distributed 495 food parcels in Yarmouk camp. Including those parcels, the total number of parcels distributed to camp residents since 30 January 2014 stands at 39,022 food parcels and 3,776 health-care parcels. An ill person was also taken out of the camp, bringing the total number of ill persons evacuated from the camp to 4,451. The competent authorities and UNRWA also provided the Palestine Red Crescent with tuberculosis, measles, tetanus, quadruple, quintuple, paediatric hepatitis and polio vaccines, vaccination syringes and tuberculosis vaccination syringes. In addition, children's medications and medicines to treat heart disease, diabetes and typhoid, along with vitamins and nutritional supplements, were provided to the residents of Yarmouk, in order to alleviate the suffering they are enduring as a result of the blockade imposed on them by armed terrorist gangs.

10. The Syrian Government will continue to cooperate with the United Nations to address any problems in the procedures that regulate the movement of humanitarian convoys as long as international agencies continue to abide by the fundamental principles governing humanitarian work, the most important of which is respect for national sovereignty, in order to facilitate the movement of relief supplies and ensure that they reach their destination as soon as possible. We reiterate that the success of such work depends on cooperation and transparency on the part of the United Nations. The Organization should not be content with constantly criticizing the Government's actions.

11. Contrary to the claims made in the Secretary-General's report that the Syrian armed forces are indiscriminately targeting civilians, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic continues to fulfil its constitutional duty to use every means to protect its citizens from the terrorist crimes that have been committed against them. Syrians have been the victims of terrorist bombings and daily indiscriminate rocket attacks against their homes, workplaces, educational and medical institutions, and religious and historical sites in all governorates. At the same time, the Government continues to strive earnestly to reach a political solution and bring about national reconciliation. This is Syria's national strategy. The success achieved in the old city of Homs is but one example of the fruits of that strategy and was preceded by successes in Rif Dimashq, Aleppo, Hama and other governorates. The Syrian Government continues to make serious efforts to restore security and stability to areas that have been affected by terrorism, with a view to finding a political solution and saving the lives of civilians and returning them to their homes.

12. We wish to reiterate that, in order to resolve humanitarian crisis that has developed in many parts of Syria, it is essential to address the roots of the problem and the factors that are exacerbating it. First and foremost, that means countering and eradicating terrorism and rescinding unilateral, punitive economic measures. It is puzzling that United Nations reports do not reflect the fact that terrorism has given rise to humanitarian needs and ignore the negative effects that unilateral coercive measures have had on the livelihoods of Syrian civilians; those are measures that have exacerbated human suffering. Indeed, the reports ignore this link despite the fact that it is acknowledged in Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014). The lack of attention to this aspect on the part of the Secretariat and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs raises doubts as to the credibility of these reports and those responsible for them. It also impedes, both directly and indirectly, the vital role that the United Nations is expected to play in countering terrorism and those who support, fund and arm terrorists.

(*Signed*) Haydar Ali **Ahmad**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.